



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Hunting News

Conservation and Recreation

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Iowa pheasant survey results show popular game bird numbers up significantly



Iowa's recently completed [annual pheasant survey](#) is great news for hunters – statewide, Iowa averaged 20.2 birds per 30-mile route, up significantly from 2019, with six of the nine survey regions averaging more than 20 pheasants per route, the most since 2007.

“Pheasant hunters should expect significantly better pheasant numbers in 2020,” said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). “Pheasant hunting this fall could be some of the best the state has seen in a decade.”

Bogenschutz credits the 2020 winter with its mild temperatures and little snowfall that led to higher hen survival and coupled with a dry spring to more successful nesting and an increase in the population. The southeast region led the way with a 163 percent increase, followed by the northeast region with a 115 percent increase and east central region with a 55 percent increase.

While those numbers are very good, the statewide numbers would have likely been better if not for the drought conditions impacting much of the state.

“In the western and central regions where we counted fewer birds, we struggled to get good survey conditions so the results are not likely representative of actual numbers,” Bogenschutz said. “Pheasant populations in these regions appear higher than last year, according to casual staff reports, even though the survey says the population is essentially unchanged.

“Given this year’s statewide index of 20 birds per route Iowa, pheasant hunters should harvest approximately 250,000 to 350,000 roosters this fall,” he said.

Iowa’s quail population was essentially unchanged from 2019 with the highest quail numbers coming from southwest Iowa. While the counts were unchanged, it is still double the number of quail counted from a decade ago. Hunters can expect to harvest more than 20,000 quail this year.

Iowa’s partridge population was up slightly over last year with higher counts coming from northcentral Iowa. Iowa’s rabbit population was nearly identical to 2019 with better populations across southern and east central Iowa. “Cottontail hunters can expect excellent hunting across most of the state this fall,” Bogenschutz said.

- Iowa’s pheasant season is Oct. 31-Jan. 10, 2021
- Iowa’s quail season is Oct. 31-Jan. 31, 2021
- Iowa’s partridge season is Oct. 10-Jan. 31, 2021
- Iowa’s cottontail rabbit season is Sept. 5-Feb. 28, 2021.

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